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CHALLENGES OF SPIRITUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Spirituality at this moment is involved in several fields of problem and is challenged to tackle different issues. Liberation spirituality is facing the disbalance produced by the industrial-military complex of the rich countries over against the exploited people in the south. Feminist spirituality is coping with the in-equality of women in the church and culture. Eco-spirituality is dealing with the violence of human beings over against nature. In many religions spirituality is involved in the inter-religious dialogue. These are only a few fields about a 'megatrend'. In September this year, there will be a congress in Germany: 'Megatrend Respiritualisierung', meaning a return of spirituality in all regions of society.

The aim of my paper is to explore the background of this 'mega trend'. What kind of spirituality is it about? Is it 'lay spirituality'? Sellner, in his survey article *Lay Spirituality*, states correctly: 'Christian spirituality has taken many forms throughout the centuries. One important form, consistently overlooked and unappreciated, is lay spirituality ¹or should we call this trend 'secular spirituality' because it is rather a new phenomenon, only understandable against the background of the secularization process in the western world? Sometimes people speak about spirituality of everyday life. Others prefer to speak about 'post modern spirituality' because the mega trend is a reaction against modernity with its extreme stress on rationality. For the moment I would prefer the name 'primordial' spirituality because this type of spirituality belongs to the basic processes of human existence. This type of spirituality is beyond or prior to the type of spirituality as it is institutionalized in the schools of spirituality, such as Hinduistic, Buddhist, and Jewish, Christian and Islamic spirituality. In a sense it is 'original', because it touches the origins of human beings and society.

In this lecture, I will explore the primordial spirituality in two steps. The first step will be: open up the field of primordial spirituality by a rough sketch of four paradigms: 1) indigenous, 2) secular, 3) American and 4) African native spirituality. The second step will be: explore primordial spirituality in a secularized society – one of the challenges spirituality is dealing with in contemporary times. This primordial spirituality, will sketch first briefly as it unfolds itself in the Netherlands. Then I will explore this spirituality more in detail: in the field of education, health care, management and ecology.

This paper was delivered during the Spirituality Forum III on August 6, 2003 at University of Sto. Tomas CME Auditorium, Manila, Philippines. This article was previously published in **Lecture Series 3 on Spirituality**, 2004. Copies of the book are available at spirit@tri-isys.com.

¹ E-Seller, Lay Spirituality, in: *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (NDCSp), 1993, 589.

1. PRIMORDIAL SPIRITUALITY

To open up the field of primordial spirituality, I use the paradigmatic method, developed by the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his *Talmudic Lecture*. In fact it is the phenomenological method of variation: to open up a field of experience by some well chosen paradigms. Looking through the paradigms the area of primordial spirituality is opened up for the interested scholar.

1.1 Indigenous Spirituality in Israel

Long before the mosaic spirituality and the spirituality of the kings and the priests were dominant in Israel, there existed the indigenous spirituality of the semi-nomadic families of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Lea and Rachel traveling with their families and cattles alongside the fertile half moon of Egypt, Canaan and Mesopotamia.

In his study *Persönliche Frommigkeit und offizielle Religion* Reiner Albertz shows how, in the context of the family which is the sustaining form of community, a kind of personal (not individualistic) piety was cultivated. This spirituality was defined by a relation in which God is called 'my Mighty One', that is, in which God is addressed as the God who shapes everyone in his or her mother's womb, causes them to be born and leads them throughout life. This is evident from their proper names. In the oldest biblical stories it was the mother who cried out the name over her child (see Gen. 4:1-5; 16:11; 21:6-7; 29:30; 35:16-20; 38:1-5). She placed the child's coming-into-being under the dominant influence of the Mighty One: he gathered the child (*Cain*), my Mighty One helped the birth process (*Eliezer*), he opened the womb (*Jephthah*), he caused the mother to give birth (*Molid*), he gave life (*Nathan*). The mother seals the birth process with the imposition of the name which this child will read right down to its source: built by God (*Bunah*), He forms (*Yetser*), God is the maker (*Elpaal*). By marking her children with these proper names, the mother from their earliest beginning brings them into contact with the Mighty One who sustains their life. The Mighty One surrounds them as an aura.² That is precisely the reason why they call him 'mighty'.³ This personal relation to God is experienced within the spirituality of the community as a whole: at the time of birth and death, on the occasion of the naming and the weaning of the child, in the child's upbringing and at the time of marriage, upon entering new pasture grounds and leaving them, at the time of illness and dangers, in the context of the assemblies and mutual helpfulness. This form of spirituality obtains its religious connections from the field of experience in which it belongs: the family. What an individual person hopes for and

² V. Maag, *Der Hirte Israels*, in: V. Maag, *Kultur, Kulturkontakt und Religion*, Göttingen-Zürich 1980, 111-144.

³ 'El (variants: 'Elohim, 'Eloha, 'Elah) goes back to the root 'wl or 'il, having as its basic meaning: power, might, strength. The same root 'wl or 'il, also underlies the words for 'tribe' and 'tribal leader.'

experiences from God has its frame of reference in what he has experienced in the years of his childhood from his parents in terms of love, affection and security.⁴

In the mosaic period in which families united in tribal associations which broke the supremacy of Egypt and the Canaanite city states, as well as in the period of the state of Israel under the Davidic dynasty, this indigenous spirituality was pushed into the background. When the great story of the official religion lost its credibility as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.), the piety of the family was much less affected by it and now gained a significance for the people as a whole which far surpassed the family circle.⁵ We observe how the extended family spirituality supplied the matrix for the survival of the crisis of the exile.⁶ Exilic texts show paradigmatically how spirituality can take over a decisive function from official religion when the latter has entered a crisis.⁷

Following the exile lay spirituality continued to play an important role.⁸ We can see that in Deuteronomic spirituality. Aside from the commands which apply to the people as a whole, there are rules for the family: the house that has to be built and in which the family lives; agriculture; family life; mutual solidarity; upbringing; fertility and birth; illness and death.⁹ Also the second temple makes space for the perspective of lay piety, as we can see in the collection of pilgrim songs (Psalms 120-124).¹⁰

1.2 Secular Spirituality in Israel

From the tenth century on 'enlightened' circles with a certain spread over the broader layers of the population as well, developed a wisdom culture that was embedded in the extensive wisdom culture of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria. Its pragmatic and experience-oriented knowledge has in view a varied target group: courtiers, civil servants, farmers, artisans, and merchants. Wisdom teachers address these groups with respect to their public functions. She takes her stands at the 'crossroads' (Prov. 8:2). Wisdom spirituality is essentially a matter of 'being schooled together.' On the one hand this being 'schooled together' took place in the broader framework of society, which is itself already an assimilation of experience and communication of values; on the other hand, it was expressly situated in a tradition: people pondered proverbs, parables, didactic poems as 'experiences of orders, indeed of laws, of the truth of which men have become convinced in the course of many generations.'¹¹

Wisdom is a form of knowledge which is described with a number of different terms. The starting point is discernment (*bina* and *tebuna*) which is based on the ability to

⁴ R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion*, Stuttgart 1978, 76.

⁵ Ibid., 165

⁶ Ibid., 178-190.

⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁸ Ibid., 190-198.

⁹ Ibid., 169-178.

¹⁰ K. Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtspsalmen*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978.

¹¹ G. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, London 1972, 90

see differences (Prov. 2:2-3; 3:18; 8:1). For this reason one of the key didactic devices is the parable (*mashal*) in which two data are held up side by side. The attentive pupil discerns between surface and depth, between truth and illusion. This is possible only when the knower has a true intuitive 'feel' (*da'at*) for the object (Prov. 1:4; 9:10; 10:9) when wisdom is guided by respect (*yir'a*): reverence, awe, astonishment, sensitivity.

Who is the human being who finds satisfaction in life,
Covets many days to enjoy the good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
Your lips from deceitful speech.
Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it. (Ps. 34:11-14)

The teacher summons his pupils to behavior that is full of respect: no slander, no deceit, no evil doing; but doing good, pursuing peace.

The central value was the good: the virtuous, the pleasing, the enjoyable all wrapped up together. The good was experienced by Israel quite simply as a force, as something which determined life, something experienced daily as effective, that is as something present, about which there need be as little discussion as about light and darkness.¹²

Wisdom spirituality is realized in the context of real life that is experienced as good. The essence of this goodness is God: 'The experiences of the world were for Israel always divine experiences as well, and the experiences of God were for her experiences of the world.'¹³ God constitutes the core of creation (Prov. 3:19; cf. 16:1, 4:22; 29:13) and the soul of the house (Ps. 127:1; cf. Prov. 10:22). He is the source of fertility, the giver of life companion, the decisive factor in battle, a helper before the court. As he faces chaotic reality, the wise man orients himself to God who is the center of knowable reality, a center that must consistently be sought out anew. This deeply respectful bond to God comes to expression in a life that conserves things and so validates itself (see Prov. 3:7, 9, 33; 8:13, 35; 11: 1; 12: 22; 14:2; 16:11; 21:13; and so forth). God comes to the fore as of support for people who are weak and helpless, a helper to the right use who attempts to live a wise, honest, and devout life. ¹⁴ This help especially applies to insight into reality: 'While I was still young before I went to my wandering, I publicly sought wisdom in my prayer. Before the temple I asked for it and I will search for it until the end' (Sir. 51:13-14). Before the eyes of the entire community (in public; standing before the temple) the wise man appears to God (to pray, implore, ask) that he may receive wisdom. 'If God who is great is willing the wise man will be filled with a spirit of discernment' (Sir. 39:6). Only a person who is blessed with this contemplative wisdom is truly a teacher, he will pour forth words

¹² Ibid., 77.

¹³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴ L. Boström, *The God of the Sages*, Stockholm 1990.

of wisdom of his own and give thanks to God in his prayer. He excels in understanding and grasps that which was hidden from him (Cf. Sir 39:7-9).

1.3 Native American Spirituality

It is assumed that the indigenous population entered 'America' more than ten thousand years ago via the Bering Strait. The cultural patterns of the various tribal groupings developed in accordance with the various ecological situations (North Pole or the region of the Amazon, sea coast or mountainous area). For all their diversity, it is still possible for us to least a number of constants in their spirituality. The tribes view themselves as part of creation. Plants, animals, and the elements are their kin, the relatives with whom they want to live in harmony.

The great text that people had to master, if they were to become wise, was their environment. The more they could know about how the plants and animals, birds, seasons, weather, hills, streams, and all the rest of their surroundings functioned, the better off they would be. Certainly they would be better off practically, in the sense of being better provisioned but, more importantly, they would be better off spiritually more at one with their surroundings, better able to commune with the Holy Forces responsible for the world.¹⁵

1.4 African Spirituality¹⁶

Sub-Saharan African spirituality, like its American counterpart, displace a great variety of forms, still here, too, one can find a number of constants. The natural environment is a divine reality: 'The moon and the stars, the rivers and the seas, the hills and the mountains, fish and animals and human beings – all carry the message of God's presence.'¹⁷ The power of God (Father and Mother) is alive and directly active in the creation: 'God is the beginning without end, all that exists has its origin and meaning in God and will terminate in God'.¹⁸ This divine reality, while it calls for reverence is at the same time a source of great joy. Life is the Creator's supreme gift. It is a matter of spirituality to receive, maintain and preserve this gift. Marriage and procreation, accordingly play a central role in African spirituality. Birth and death are surrounded by highly sophisticated rituals. The object of healing rituals is to preserve life, the life that is threatened by sickness, evil influences, and the aging process. The actual *Sitz-im-Leben* is the family unit. By being born into a family, one participates in the current of life. There one receives his name – which frequently refers to the divine Source - one's character, one's place and significance in life. A person lives in fellowship with the other members of the community, as brothers and

¹⁵ Ibid., 699.

¹⁶ For a brief survey, see C. Egbulem, African Spirituality, in: NDCSp (1993), 17-21; A. Shorter, *African Christian Spirituality*, Maryknoll (NJ) 1980; B. Lele, *Family Spirituality in Africa*, Eldoret (Kenya) 1982; G. Huizer, *Folk Spirituality and Liberation in Southern Africa*, Talence (France) 1991; P. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples. The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*, Minneapolis 1995; A. Ehirim-Donko, *African Spirituality. On Becoming Ancestors*, Trenton (NJ) 1997.

¹⁷ C. Egbulem, *ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., 18

sisters, on the basis of equality. Hospitality and social justice are integral to this community life. Genealogical awareness; by way of a kinship system one is part of an extended family. Here one receives his place in the generations. Within this system the ancestors, the 'living dead,' play an important role. The living are their heirs and receive from them their life-giving influence. Parents deserve respect because they are close to joining their ancestors. Spiritually, the memory of one's ancestors is of great importance. After all, they fulfill an intermediary role between God and the people. Memorial takes shape in the oral tradition. The experiences and insights of the past are transmitted in song and music, dance and poetry, proverbs and stories, rituals and prayers. In oral tradition one discovers one's origin and destiny, receives one's place in time and space, discovers one's environment and the course of one's life, is integrated into the community which mediates life.

When we look back on these primordial spirituality we can distinguish five interlocking lines.

1. Within the framework of the extended family a deep personal relationship with the divine reality was experienced, mediated by proper names, prayers, stories, proverbs, rituals and forms of being schooled together.
2. Life itself, more precise the goodness of Life, a precious gift of the Creator, is the place where the divine-human relationship is lived. Life for human being is primordial. Therefore we can name this spirituality 'primordial'.
3. The community develops ways of discernment: to see the difference between the way of life and the way of death, between superficial and deeper knowledge. They gained also insight into the course of life and one's destiny.
4. The community is part of the creation. On this basis there is a kinship with plants, animals and the elements. The place where the community lives and works mediates the relationship with the surrounding Cosmos. This Cosmos is experienced as divine.
5. The community is not limited to the living members but encompasses also the ancestors, the 'living dead'.

2. PRIMORDIAL SPIRITUALITY IN A SECULARIZED WORLD

My second step will be: explore elements of primordial spirituality in a secularized world. Before I describe more in detail some particular forms or aspects of secularity. I will give first a short sketch of spirituality in the Netherlands at this moment. We will see that, inspite of a decline in church-affiliation, religiosity, and particular spirituality are not diminishing. After this sketch I will explore more in detail spirituality in the field of education, healthcare, management and environment.

2.1 God in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands research is being conducted into the religious views of all the Netherlands, both churchd and unchurchd. The first survey took place in 1966; the Waaijman: Challenges of Spirituality in Contemporary Times

second in 1979; the third in 1996. This last survey, called *God in Nederland*,¹⁹ contains interesting information about spirituality. A majority of the Dutch population say they have something going with God (66%), see something meaningful in prayer (62%), say they have had a religious experience (47%), view themselves as religious (67%). The number of people who consider themselves religious is higher than the number of those who call themselves church-affiliated (43%). In the recent past church affiliation has declined, but religiousness (in the judgment of the people themselves of course) has not. 'Developments in the life of the institutional church and those in personal religiosity do not run parallel.'²⁰ The church affiliation and religiosity can diverge is the conviction of the vast majority (96%). They believe that one can be a religious person without ever going to church (90% in 1996); in 1979 it was (94%)

The institutional form which religiosity has assumed in the churches, has declined to 43%. But faith experience does not run parallel with that: a majority call themselves in some fashion religious (67%) and having a belief in God (63%). In 1979 that number was 68%. The intensity of the experience has even increased: from 24% in 1979 to 34% in 1996. Fewer people align themselves with the institutional form of the faith (this leaves them cold) while more people have seen their interest grow where it concerns the *experience* of faith.²¹ Generally speaking, in the experiences of the people since 1979, personal faith has become more intense and of greater importance.²²

To the question: 'Do you think that it is meaningful for you to pray?' 45% answered: 'Yes - it is' whereas 17% have doubts: 'Perhaps it is.'²³ Among church affiliated people the percentages are higher: a majority found prayer meaningful (63% of the Catholics, 76% of the mainline Reformed; 80% of the Reformed (Gereformeeden)). It is remarkable that 31% of the church-affiliated do not see prayer as meaningful for them while a considerable number of unchurch individuals *do* regard it as meaningful.²⁴ What could be the significance of the clause 'that it is meaningful for you yourself?' The researchers think it implies the expectation that the prayer will be heard.²⁵ I myself doubt that. I think that one must first of all link it with the idea that it is intrinsically worthwhile to pray. In that case, the question is: Is prayer meaningful to you regardless of the opinion of others? I believe the people being interviewed did not think primarily of formulaic or liturgical prayers. I believe they thought simply like Therese of Lisieux: 'Prayer, to me, is a spontaneous expression of the heart, simply an upward glance toward heaven, a cry of acknowledgement and love in the midst of trial, but just as much in the midst of joy.'²⁶

¹⁹ G. Dekker, J. de Hart & J. Peters, *God in Nederland 1966-1996*, Amsterdam 1997

²⁰ Ibid., 27.

²¹ Ibid., 69-71, and 120.

²² Ibid., 23

²³ Ibid., 76

²⁴ Ibid., 61

²⁵ Ibid., 21.

²⁶ Therese de Lisieux, *Manuscrits autobiographiques C25 recto*. We are following Thérèse de Lisieux, *Oeuvres Complètes. Textes et Dernières Paroles*, (Ed. J. Lonchamp), Paris 1992.

The idea people in 1996 had of God was less sharply defined than in 1966. The firm statement: 'There is a God who concerns himself with everyone personally' lost support (from 47% in 1966 to 24% in 1996). People now prefer more tentative statements like 'There has to be something like a higher power which controls life' (from 31% in 1966 to 39% in 1996) and 'I do not know whether there is a God or a higher power' (from 16% to 27%). While the idea of God has become more tentative, his location has become more definite: 'God is not up there but only in the hearts of people' (52%). The idea that God is no longer 'up there' is interpreted by the researchers as 'vague belief in transcendence' or as 'horizontal immanentism'.²⁷ This interpretation is governed by systematic-theological categories. God's residence in the hearts of people, however, points rather in the direction of spirituality. It is natural for people to situate spirituality in the center of human affectivity. God is moved by the ways of human beings and their soul feels it intensely (Ps. 139). This is not introversion but the interiorization of God's presence.

Against the background of the above, it no longer surprises us that 47% of all the Netherlands say they have had a religious experience. After all, the worthwhileness of prayer and the presence of God in the heart constitute the important layer of the experience of God. The question was framed in an open way: 'Many people have moments when they have the feeling that they are experiencing a higher power, a higher force, or God. How is that with you? Have you ever in anyway experienced the presence of a higher power, a higher force, or God?' It is noteworthy that almost half of the respondents answered in the affirmative and additionally stated that this experience did not stop there but continued to have an impact in their life (75%).

2.2 Spirituality and Education

In 1993 the British National Curriculum Council issued a discussion paper on the education of children under the title *Spirituality and Moral Development*.²⁸ The introduction of the word 'spiritual' in the context of education was not new. The *Education Act* of 1944 had already pointed out the obligation of local education authorities to make a contribution 'to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community.' The *Educational Reform Act* of 1988 stated that the schools were expected to furnish a curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.²⁹

The Office of Standards in Education was not intending to regard 'the spiritual and moral development' of pupils a dead letter. It was going to be one of the criteria in light of which a school would be judged. This led to request for clarification. Spirituality was not a familiar item.³⁰ What does spiritual development entail? What

²⁷ G. Dekker, J. de Hart & J. Peters, *God in Nederland 1966- 1996*, Amsterdam 1997, 18, 55-57, 62.

²⁸ National Curriculum Council, *Spiritual and Moral Development. A Discussion Paper*. York, 1993.

²⁹ For an account of the development from 1944 on, see P. Gilliat, *Spiritual Education and Public Policy 1944-1994*, in: *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child* (Ed. R. Best), London 1996, 161-172; D. Rose *Religious Education, Spirituality and Acceptable Face of Indoctrination*, *ibid.*, 173-183.

³⁰ D. Kibble, *spiritual Development, Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Education*, *ibid.*, 64.

is the meaning of the much-used phrase 'the whole child'? What is the connection and difference between spiritual and moral development? In the *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools* (1993) the Office of Standards of Education defines spiritual development from the perspective of the pupil as follows: the capacity to think and reflect; curiosity and a feeling of awe and wonder; the ability to discuss religious convictions; having open relations; having an appreciation of imagination, inspiration and contemplation; raising questions about meaning and purpose. In 1994 the same agency once again succinctly defines how pupil profit from provisions which foster spiritual development.³¹ A key text is a fragment from the above mentioned discussion paper issued by the National Curriculum Council in 1993:

The term 'spiritual' applies to all pupils. The potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith. To limit spiritual development in this way would be to exclude from its scope the majority of pupils in our schools who do not come from overtly religious backgrounds. The term needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition... it has to do with the universal search for human identity... with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values to which to live.³²

The National Curriculum Council in its discussion paper introduced the tension between the sphere of 'specific faith' (religious ideas, conversion, an explicit religious background) and something fundamental in human existence (the universal search for individual identity; responding to challenging questions, the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values which we live). This tension determines the ambivalent attitude of the educators. Some favor an open view that is called 'secular' and 'humanistic':³³ spiritual, according to this view, is a human dimension marked by consciousness, a broad perspective, a wholistic vision, integration, wonder, gratitude, hope, courage, energy, detachment, acceptance, love, friendliness.³⁴ Others simply declare: God exists whether we choose to acknowledge him or not;³⁵ God is co-constitutive of our personhood.³⁶ It is remarkable that educators who put spirituality at the center of education have an ambivalent attitude toward God.

On this point the child himself or herself seems less ambivalent. Research shows that, in a conversational context that is not focused on the religious, children do not produce anthropomorphic caricatures when they spontaneously talk about God. It is only when they have to say what they mean that God changes into an old man with a

³¹ Office of Standards of Education, *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development*, London 1994, 9-10.

³² National Curriculum Council, *ibid.*, 2

³³ See, for example, J. White, *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child. A Humanist Perspective*, *ibid.*, 30-42.

³⁴ C. Beck, *Better Schools*, London 1991 cf. D. Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature*, New York 1993; A. Rodger, *Human Spirituality. Towards an Educational Rationale*, in: *Education Spirituality and the Whole Child* 45; G. Baldwin, *Modern Spirituality, Moral Education and the History Curriculum*, *ibid.*, 207; J White, *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child. A Humanist Perspective*, *ibid.*, 34.

³⁵ M. Warner, *Head teacher's Perceptions of the Role in Spiritual Education. Some Empirical Data and a Discussion*, *ibid.*, 225.

³⁶ A. Wright, *The Child in Relationship*, *ibid.*, 147.

white beard in heaven.³⁷ Awakening spirituality, for that matter is still an unexplored area of research.³⁸ Meanwhile it is an established fact that, when people look back upon their life, 50-60 percent of them say they had a far-reaching spiritual experience.³⁹ This is confirmed by research in which what children say about God is documented.⁴⁰ Spiritual education will succeed only if it ties with the spirituality of the children themselves.⁴¹ That means listening long and without prejudice to their stories, along the lines drawn by Robert Coles who for thirty years interviewed children about their spirituality.⁴² His conclusion was that the spirituality of children is strongly interwoven with questions about death, life on earth and the environment. Spirituality awakens in the context of direct relationships.⁴³ The spirituality of the children is indigenous.

2.3 Spirituality and Health Care

The last years, I had the opportunity to work with nurses and doctors in the Academic Hospital St. Radboud of the University of Nijmegen. I trained them there, and discovered that these professionals not only work with great dedication, but also with great compassion. For them 'spirituality' is a meaningful word, when you listen carefully to their stories. This experience I found confirmed in literature. In present day health care spirituality is beginning to get more attention.⁴⁴ Sick people must not be 'medicalized' isolated, eliminated or exploited; they need to be respected as people with an integrity of their own. The spiritual life of patients needs to be explicitly involved in the care provided; the nursing staff needs to be competent; attention needs to be paid to the integrity of those providing nursing care. Within the field of health care, attempts are being made to again give spirituality a place in nursing care. Just two examples, Verna Benner Carson mentions a number of interventions which can mediate God's healing power: the presence of the nurse and physical touch; listening to the patient and being empathetic; keeping one's own vulnerability and receptivity available; humility and solidarity; prayer; the use of Scripture or other religious sources; giving the patient a chance to take part in religious rituals; the protection of holy objects the patient wears or has with her; championing the religious feelings and convictions of the patient.⁴⁵ Another example on the basis of her years of experience with cancer patients, Miriam Jacik describes as desirable the following attitude toward patients: entering into a relationship with

³⁷ O. Petrovich, *An Examination of Piaget's Theory of Childhood Artificialism* (unpub. Diss.) Oxford 1989, cited in R. Nye, *Childhood Spirituality and Contemporary Development Psychology*, in: *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, 112

³⁸ R. Nye, *ibid.*, 108-120.

³⁹ D. Hay, *Religious Experience Today, Studying the Facts*, London 1990.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., J. Taylor, *Innocent Wisdom, Children of Spiritual Guides*, New York 1989; M. Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, London 1998; C. Erricker & J. Erricker, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in: *Education Spirituality and the Whole Child*, 184-195; E. McCreery, *Talking to Young Children About Things Spiritual*, *ibid.*, 196-205.

⁴¹ A. Rodger, *Human Spirituality: Towards an Educational Rationale*, *ibid.*, 46.

⁴² R. Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, London 1992.

⁴³ B. Lealman, *The Whole Vision of the Child*, in: *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, 26.

⁴⁴ See for example: V. Benner Carson, *Spiritual Dimensions of Nursing Practices*, Philadelphia 1989; A. Bradshaw, *Lighting the Lamp. The Spiritual Dimensions of Nursing Care*, Harrow 1995; J. Harrison & P. Burnard, *Spirituality and Nursing Practices*, Aldershot 1993

⁴⁵ *Spirituality and the Nursing Process*, in: V. Benner Carson, *Spiritual Dimension of Nursing Practices*, Philadelphia 1989, 164-175.

them; sharing in the individuals pain; listening even when it is inconvenient; saying little or nothing at times; being a companion on another's journey, not a problem solver; seriously responding to another's concern; having the courage to be present to another; loving people, even the unlovable; admitting one's own brokenness in the process; giving another a chance to change; not taking away another's responsibility; acknowledging the limits of our own help; leaving others free to make their own decisions and promoting their own values, goals and personal views.⁴⁶ These are two testimonies of professionals who worked many years with sick people in the hospital and are at the same time scholars in the field of spirituality of the healthcare. They illustrate the impact of spirituality in this primordial field of experience: sickness and healing.

2.4 Spirituality and Management

When you surf on Internet, you can go to the Management. There you will find the Department of Management and Spirituality. The staff members of the Department offer you a selected Bibliography *Spirit at Work*, encompassing around 600 titles of scholarly works in the field of spirituality and business. I made a first analysis of this books and articles. The following profile came to the fore.

1. In the literature words are used like spirit, soul and interior, to underline the importance of basic drives as: energy, motivation, vision, creativity, knowledge. They all point to what is called the 'human potentials'.
2. People within the company speak about orientation and values. What is the aim of the organization? What is its orientation? On the agenda are questions like: quality, dignity, life. The principle of profit is discussed. Virtues are brought to the fore: simplicity, trust, wisdom.
3. Organizations are looking for strategies to interiorize the values in the life of the working people. Trainings are introduced. The management is trained to develop the essential values of the company, so that the people can bring in their motivation and creativity. Forms of intervention are introduced. Many companies perceive themselves as 'learning community.'

Of course, I am critical enough to be suspicious. Much of recent attempts to introduce spirituality in business could be interpreted as aspects of manipulative 'management of the soul', as means used to stimulate people to work harder. But the more I am in contact with managers, the more I am convinced that spirituality in the company is a serious attempt. In the project 'Zin in Werk' of the Fraters van Tilburg during the master class *Management and Spirituality* I discovered real interest in the renewal of management and organizations from the perspective of spirituality.

At the moment many companies agree on five factors that mark the spiritual caliber of a business enterprise: (1) a sound business code in which the central values of an

⁴⁶ Nursing, Science and Service, A Historical Perspective, in: V. Benner Carson, *Spiritual Dimensions of Nursing Practices*, Philadelphia 1989, 53-54

enterprise are defined and strategies for reaching these goals are indicated; (2) attention to product quality and taking proper steps to test and guard this quality internally; (3) appreciation for the person of one's fellow worker and attention to mutual relations; (4) the social outlook of the business: does this company cut itself off from or make a contribution to the common interest? (5) responsibility for the quality of the environment.

2.5 Ecological Spirituality

Environmental spirituality is marked by contrast to a rapidly deteriorating ecosphere: the earth is affected by monocultures, soil erosion, pollution, overpopulation, bio-industries; water is polluted because of chemical emissions, exhaust gasses, the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, radio-active materials; raw materials are depleted on account of the over production of certain goods and the excessive use of energy.

This deterioration of the ecosphere is structurally caused by a network of factors.⁴⁷ The natural sciences which mediate our knowledge of nature are reductionistic. Technology in its many forms is expanding without constraints all over the globe via multinational business enterprises. The global economy, moving as it does in the field of tension between production and consumption, mediated by the so called free market, is rudderless.

Toward the end of the 19th century the environmental movement rose up in protest against the exploitation. Initially this movement took the form of a romantically colored love of nature which expresses itself in poetry, philosophical ideas, visionary language, and informal groups. Quite rapidly, however, this romantic love of nature developed into a passion to conserve nature. Individuals simply began to form their own funds, organizations and philosophy. Gradually these private interests merged. Smaller organizations united into larger societies for the conservation of nature. In the seventies the resulting environmental movement developed in a philosophical and political direction.

Interesting for spirituality is eco-sophy, a philosophical reinterpretation of our relationship with our environment. Over and against the objectivizing attitude towards the environment and grounded in an anthropocentric dualism, humans dominate an objectivized world existing outside of themselves. The ecological spirituality for the future, proceeds from the notion of a partnership' relation.⁴⁸ Some authors express this relation empathetically. Others view the relation as one of participation in a whole: humans are part of a whole which they only grasp in part.

⁴⁷ *Technology and the Environment*, (Ed. F. Ferré), Breenwich 1992; J. Cobb, *Sustainability, Economics, Ecology and Justice*, New York 1992; M. de Geus, *Politiek, milieu en vrijheid*, Utrecht 1993.

⁴⁸ H. Kessler, *Das Stöhnen der Natur. Plädoyer für Schöpfungsspiritualität und Schöpfungsethik*, Düsseldorf 1990; Th. Berry, *Befriending the Earth. A Theology of Reconciliation between Humans and the Earth*, Mystic 1991; J. Nash, *Loving Nature. Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, Nashville 1991; K. O'Gorman, *Toward the Cultivation of Ecological Spirituality. The Possibilities of Partnership in Religious Education* 87 (1992), 606-618.

Still others stress the personal dimension: nature is a person one can meet, with whom one can form a friendship, a partner who ask for solidarity, a fellow creature. In ecological spirituality one frequently encounters the use of relational language game. Ecological spirituality 'is shaped by a distinctive way of thinking and feeling: one that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, the intrinsic value of all life, the continuity of human with non-human life, and the compassion of God for all life.'⁴⁹ If the humanity-nature relation is viewed as 'relational,' the notion of 'responsibility' follows.⁵⁰ Humans are obligated to give an account of their conduct to nature and to future generations. Both speaking with authority, and demand accountability.

An important aspect of this relational imagery is the idea of deep ecology: we should decipher on a personal way the meaning of our environment. Environment is like a text that has to be deciphered. The well known ecosopher Arne Naess pleads for everyone to attempt to decipher their environment from within their own situation, motivated by 'a deep yes to nature': What do we say yes to? Very difficult to find out – there is a deep unconditionality, but at the same time there is a kind of regret, sorrow or displeasure.⁵¹ It is from within the lived experience that a personal-ecological significance to comes to light: 'I'm not much interested in ethics or morals. I'm interested into our fundamental belief, not especially to ethics. Ethics follows from how we experience the world.'⁵² Experience is interpretation and interpretation is a voyage of discovery.

Conclusion

Looking back on the spirituality that grows within the context of the secularized society of the Netherlands – outside the institutionalized forms of belief and the traditional schools of spirituality as organized in traditional religious life – I would conclude that this secular spirituality is indeed primordial. The reason is: the secular spirituality is deeply linked with the primordial processes of life: processes of education and learning, processes of work and organization, processes of care and compassion, processes of becoming home in the environment surrounding us. This processes are not ruled by religious institutions or spiritual schools. They are linked with the primordial processes of life, and are in that sense original and primal.

The challenge of spirituality is: to respect the own language of this primordial spirituality. We saw the challenge in education. The parents apparently are ambiguous: should we or should we not implant the idea of God in the heart of our

⁴⁹ J. McDaniel, *Earth, Sky, God and Mortals. Developing an Ecological Spirituality*, Mystic 1990, 182.

⁵⁰ D. Hall, *The Steward, A Biblical Symbol come of Age*, Grand Rapids-New York 1990; A. Meyer & J. Meyer, *Earth Keepers, Environmental Perspectives on Hunger, Poverty and Injustice*, Scottdale (PA) 1991; W. van Nunen, *De intrinsieke waarde van de natuur als ethisch dilemma. Pleidooi voor een participerende houding ten opzichte van de natuur als basis voor een ecologische ethiek*, Tilburg 1993; M. Oelschlager, *Caring for Creation. An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis*, New Haven 1994.

⁵¹ D. Rothenberg, *Ecosophy, From Intuition to System*, in: A. Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, New York 1991, 20. The label "T" refers to the mountain hut "Tvergastein" (= "over against the rocks").

⁵² Ibid.

children. It would be better to listen to the primordial language of the children self. I saw it also in the survey *God in the Netherlands*. People say: 'God lives in the heart of the people.' Theologians do not appreciate this primordial language, because they are the prisoner of their own institutional language. I experience it also during my work with the laical organizations in Holland. When I tell my colleagues in theology what I discovered in the area of education, healthcare and management, they laugh skeptically. Without words they say: 'Trendy things.' But I, at the same moment, think silently: 'You are the prisoners of your own institutionalized language. When we have the courage to listen to reality, to the growing interest in spirituality in the different areas of human life, than we would discover a type of spirituality that has the same structure as the primordial spirituality in the Middle East as has been described in the Bible, the same primordial spirituality as we have seen in the different forms of indigenous spirituality.'

The challenge of spirituality is: **to discover and to strengthen the primordial spirituality, beyond the institutionalized forms of the traditional schools but presupposed by them. We should respect and strengthen this primordial spirituality both in its indigenous and in its secular forms.**

About the Author

Prof. Dr. Kees Waaijman, O. Carm studied Philosophy and Theology in the Theological University of Nijmegen. He got his doctorate in 1976 with the study of Martin Buber's "*De mystiek van ik en jij*" (Mysticism of I and Thou). Following his doctorate, he pursued Jewish studies in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, becoming a specialist in Biblical Spirituality, especially in the Spirituality of the Psalms and Jewish Mysticism. He works in the Theology Department of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, in the area of Spirituality, and has developed a new theology of Spirituality that leads him to publish **Spirituality, forms, foundations and methods (Peeters:2002)**, a 968-page textbook that is a systematic guide to the extensive field of spirituality. During the last 30 years, he helped build up and is now the Director of the Titus Brandsma Institute in the Catholic University of Nijmegen, (now Radboud University). Among his publications, he has many articles about Spirituality, a commentary of 10 books on the Psalms, 17 booklets on the Spirituality of the Psalms, a book entitled *The Mystical space of the Carmelite Rule*, a book on the prophet Elijah, and a book on the name of 'Yahweh'.